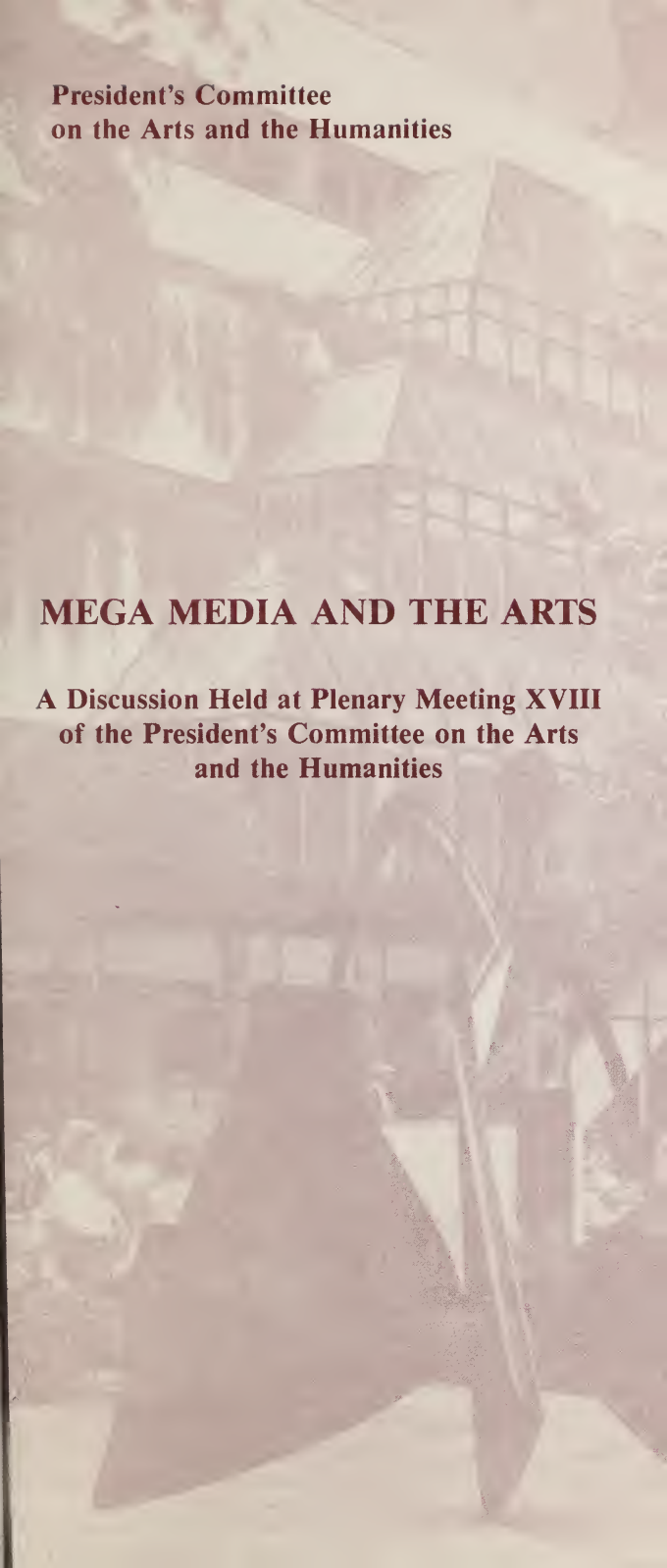
President's Committee
on the Arts and the Humanities

MEGA MEDIA AND THE ARTS

A Discussion Held at Plenary Meeting XVIII of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities



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The Edited Transcript of a Discussion Held at
Plenary Meeting XVIII of the President's Committee
on the Arts and the Humanities

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GERALD S. LESSER is Biglow Professor of Education and Developmental Psychology at Harvard and Chairman, Board of Advisors of the Children's Television Workshop. He is also currently a Senior Fellow at the Gannett Center for Media Studies at Columbia University. He wrote *Children and Television: Lessons from Sesame Street*. Mr. Lesser taught at Adelphi University and Hunter College of the City University and has been a Guggenheim Fellow and Visiting Professor, Institute of Communications Research, Keio University, Japan.

Welcome

MR. HEISKELL: I extend a welcome to our members and guests. We will now turn to the major subject, the effects of media on the distribution of culture and the arts in the coming years.

In our search for a moderator for this discussion, we came upon Gerald Lesser, who is Bigelow Professor of Education and Developmental Psychology at Harvard and Chairman of the Board of Advisors of the Children's Television Workshop. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Gannett Center for Media Studies, and he wears a good number of hats. When asked to take the lead in doing this, he said, "But I am not an expert in this field. I don't really know anything about it. I know something about children." Two broken arms later, he agreed to take on the chore. [laughter]

As very distinguished people in their field, our panel of experts will tell you that the field is moving so rapidly that it is very difficult to be able to talk more than a few years into the future.

Introduction

MR. LESSER: Thank you, Andrew. I would like to thank the expert panelists flanking me at the table, the invited participants and of course, the members of the President's Committee, for coming.

I am here to "moderate" our conversation. I understand that previous plenary meetings of the President's Committee

on the Arts and the Humanities have been marked by a considerable amount of physical violence among the members. [laughter] I guess the Committee felt that a referee, or at least a moderator, was needed here this morning.

I will say a brief word about how our discussion is organized. We will have five presentations from the panel, each for about 10 minutes. There will be, at around 11 o'clock, a brief demonstration of the equipment you see in the corner. We will have that demonstration during the coffee break, and our remaining time will be devoted to open discussion among panelists, participants, and President Committee members.

As Andrew mentioned earlier, we were unable to find the precisely correct title for this, but we are calling it for the time being, "Mega Media and the Arts." We will discuss a wide range of new technologies, from video cassettes, which are not quite so new any more, to computers, to interactive video disk and so on. We will discuss the expanded opportunities that they provide for development and for dissemination of the arts and the humanities.

Although we don't yet have anything that approaches a comprehensive body of knowledge about these new media, surely one of their powerful properties is quite clear; that is, the degree of viewer control and viewer access that they provide. With the older media, it was generally the broadcaster who decided what you saw and when you saw it. With these new media, the locus of control shifts to the viewer, to the learner, who decides what and when to watch and even more importantly, when to use all of the opportunities to jump ahead, to go back, to review, to branch into new directions.

This increased viewer control provides, I think, truly new opportunities for learning, and we are here to discuss how we can exploit these new opportunities. We will discuss them from several vantage points, starting with Background and History. Lawrence Pitkethly, to my right, will start with that topic. We will then discuss in turn Technology with Bruce Spector; Production Issues, John Goberman; Distribution, Milos Stehlik; and Opportunities for the Cultural Community, Chloe Aaron. None of these topics is an isolated one. Each will spill over into the other.

Lawrence Pitkethly, who will be speaking about the background and history of this area, is a writer and film director. He is a founder and director of the New York Center for Visual History, a nonprofit media production company which produces documentary films and videos on original and neglected aspects of American culture. He is also the Executive Producer of "Voices and Visions," which is a large-scale, 13-part television series on American poetry. Lawrence, please begin.

LAWRENCE PITKETHLY is a writer and film director who is currently writing *Paternoster,* a book on the father in modern culture. He is the founder and director of the New York Center for Visual History, a non-profit media production company. Mr. Pitkethly is also the Executive Producer of "Voices & Visions," a $7 million, 13-part television series on American poetry. As part of this project, Mr. Pitkethly established a literary archive on film which will be housed at the Library at Lincoln Center. Mr. Pitkethly is a published poet.

Background and History

MR. PITKETHLY: I have always found that poets have useful things to say about most subjects and help to place even novelty in perspective. I would like to lead off the discussion this morning by invoking a poet, not an American poet, but the Mexican poet and critic Octavio Paz. In a speech a few years ago titled "Television Culture and Diversity," Paz commented on the relative sweetness or sourness of the uses of technology. He approached the subject from the points of view of the artist and the audience, vantage points which I think ought to be conspicuous in our discussion this morning.

Paz argued that technological innovations are not in themselves solutions to problems, but depend on how they are employed for their benefits. He gave the example of the invention of writing, which according to the great French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, at first had a hand in enslaving humanity. Levi-Strauss wrote, "In fact, until the invention of printing, writing represented the secret and sacred knowledge of a large number of bureaucratic castes."

Now compare this statement to a recent article on the video trade, which appeared in the October 1987 *Independent,* published by the Association of Independent Video and Film Makers. The writer of this article, Renee Tajima, concluded that video distribution is not a way to make a living as an artist. Tajima looked at videos distributed by The Kitchen,

Electronic Arts Intermix, and the Video Data Bank and wrote, "Even well known artists in the video scene can earn only a drop in the bucket from rentals and sales of their tapes, especially from the traditional, educational, cultural market of schools, museums, galleries and libraries."

The writer points to the esoteric, arcane, slightly monastic, slightly medieval nature of the video trade as the culprit. Like the bureaucratic caste who controlled writing, those who control video—perhaps unsuspectingly—have not yet figured out a way to include artists in the new opportunities. So immediately we are faced with a problem. A new opportunity exists to expand the arts from which the artist, by and large, may be excluded.

Let me offer a second caveat. The forms of communication in our culture change very slowly. Innovations, for the most part, usher in business as usual. If anyone has ever wondered why the video store seems such a familiar, reassuring sort of place, it is because it is not selling anything that is radically new; it is structured like any other sort of store.

The conventions of cinema and television are inherited from popular fiction and journalism, from theater and vaudeville, and their forms would be quite familiar to a 19th century audience. Even video has struggled for some time to reach the level of sophistication of film. Only now, with 1,200 lines, is video definition reaching the picture quality that 35 millimeter film reached decades ago. So the much-vaunted video revolution has to be kept in perspective. In some respects, it is often media hype, a way of promoting the latest piece of technology which may or may not turn out to be worthless.

Media theoretician Brian Winston, in *Misunderstanding Media*, published by the Harvard University Press several years ago, goes so far as to argue that the glibness of many commentators about the so-called information revolution can be attributed to a general lack of historical sense. This results in far-reaching misunderstandings about electronic media, their development, diffusion and present forms. What Winston and other revisionist historians argue is that the continuities between 19th and 20th century developments in media are much greater than the divisions and disruptions, a point of view that is a much needed corrective to the media babble we often hear.

Despite these limitations, video and other gadgetries are changing the cultural landscape in ways just as important as the invention of cinema or the invention of television. It is useful to note what these are.

The greatest advance is that brought about by the video cassette recorder and pre-recorded video cassettes, because these create the illusion of permanence. With video cassettes, the moving image achieves a new victory. It can be replayed and thus exists as a subject for reflection by an individual at home, not just as an entertainment to be consumed. It is because of this that the VCR extends and expands the possibilities for cultural experience. It is also, as we are beginning to witness, an extraordinary educational tool for precisely the same reason. It is being used in many colleges as one component of a tele-course.

Second, video transformations create the possibility of a new sort of artist, a video artist, whose work can be exhibited and circulated by museums such as the one we are in today, as in fact it is. I would go further. Video opens up opportunities for all artists: painters, poets, dramatists, composers, in fact for everyone who agrees with Laurie Anderson that the media is the environment. Octavio Paz, whom I have already mentioned, in another speech claimed that the television screen can be used for poetry, and argued that for the first time in history, poets and their interpreters and collaborators—musicians, actors, graphic designers, illustrators, painters—have at their disposal a medium that is simultaneously spoken word and written sign, oral and visual image.

Third, the possibilities for storage on laser disk, a technology that claims to last at least six centuries, transforms the ways in which the world's audio-visual archives can be kept. Fourth, it is undoubtedly true that many videos increase access to the arts. Examples of this range from Robert Wilson's "Civil Wars" to the upcoming *Mahabharata*, to performances by Baryshnikov or Pavarotti. Others include the films produced in the past seven years through the Office of Film and Television at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and "Voices and Visions" distributed by the Annenberg/Corporation for Public Broadcasting project and Intellimation in Santa Barbara, California.

With all of these advantages, where does the problem lie? It is, I would suggest, in the fact that a cultural product, because it is not primarily entertainment, is essentially marginal to the video trade as it has developed. In a sense, the marketplace has shot up around us with its own staggered or accentuated rates of growth, and cultural production is a very tiny plant in comparison.

According to the *Home Video Publisher*, February 1, 1988, a survey of cultural and performing arts programming showed that the 51 all-time best-selling titles in cultural

performing arts had combined cumulative sales in excess of 595,000 units and grossed over $13.5 million for their ten suppliers. The report points out that this programming category, like motherhood, won high praise from the multitudes, but in terms of sales lagged behind children's, sports and exercise videos.

In other words, Jane Fonda, Kathy Smith or Raquel Welch can sell commercial specialized videos, but it is much more difficult for Horowitz or Picasso. In fact, if you analyze the list, 21 of those 51 titles sold 7,000 or less, which is really a pittance from the point of a view of the producers. The one advantage of this type of video distribution for the distributor is that it does have a long shelf life and can be repeated. I would point out that the highest grossing video on the list is Baryshnikov's *Nutcracker*, which sold 105,000 at $29.95 each and brought in $1.9 million.

It might be argued that the solution to the problem is the identification, mapping and building of specialized markets. This leaves out one very important aspect of the question, the high cost of production of most cultural and performing arts videos. Usually video tapes sell because they have had exposure on Public Television or HBO or the Arts and Entertainment Network, in the same way that theatrical titles sell because they have been seen at cinemas and widely marketed. This is where the idea of partnership must come—between the primary broadcast outlet, the video distributor, the producer, and the funders or underwriters who are naturally interested in the largest possible distribution of the program they support. I suspect that very little thinking has gone into these sorts of partnerships in the past, but, in my view, they are the key to a more effective, more coherent distribution strategy in the future.

Today it is doubtful if even the most "souped up" distribution system will return enough dollars to the producer for those revenues to become part of the production money, as is the case with theatrical films. For example, I can't imagine a distributor investing $1 million in a television series such as "Voices and Visions." It may be that the situation will change.

You will shortly hear from one of my colleagues about new ventures that are changing the educational marketplace, utilizing the old fashioned library. I could imagine other more direct, more targeted efforts that penetrate the home, or utilize existing networks. But most distribution companies are not set up to invest in the specialized targeting that a single video may demand. Perhaps specialized studies could be commissioned and funded.

If we wish our cultural productions to reach larger audiences, I don't believe that an ad hoc, catch-as-catch-can approach to distribution will ever catch fire. A lot of video and film products have been around for decades. To begin to catch up with the distribution potential will take a considerable amount of effort.

But the most important point is that you cannot equate video distribution with the situation of print and publishing. The high cost of production and the absolute necessity of advertising exposure through broadcast demands distribution strategies that are more coherent. Distribution has to be put into place at the right time; otherwise it will be a long saga of missed opportunities.

This brings me full circle to the situation of the artist and the audience. In thinking how radical, how revolutionary, video technology is, we might pose this question: how do changes in video technology affect the circumstances of the artist's life? Are they a liberation, an opportunity, a source of much needed revenue, and so a fund of creative energy? Or are they, for most artists, business as usual?

Similarly, is the video trade going to think about the audience as members of a diverse, democratic culture or will it continue to think of them as objects of a marketing strategy? I would like to see an agenda for the future which keeps at least these questions in mind. Otherwise the real benefits of video technology, like the invention of writing, will be shrouded in a medieval system and kept from the culture at large.

MR. LESSER: Thank you for opening the topic in a very useful way. We will move on to Technology, our next topic. As I mentioned, all of the things that Lawrence discussed in his introductory remarks are interrelated—technology, distribution and production.

Bruce Spector, who will talk to us on the topic of Technology, is President of the MegaMedia Center and Executive Director of the New York Video Workshop. He has produced and directed many video projects, too numerous, as the saying goes, to mention. So Bruce, please begin.

Technology

MR. SPECTOR: Thank you. I have the not entirely unenviable task this morning of dispelling in the next ten minutes all of your confusions and doubts about the new technologies. Let me begin by trying to offer some kind of conceptual

BRUCE EDWARD SPECTOR is President of the MegaMedia Center in New York and Executive Director of the New York Video Workshop. He has produced and directed numerous independent television, corporate and music video projects as well as print advertising, publications and typography. As Director of the New York Video Workshop, Mr. Spector has in the last two years administered and taught video production in conjunction with the School of Visual Arts. He designed and supervised the construction of the newly completed video facilities at the School of Visual Arts in New York City.

reference. I have to begin with change; change is the order of our day. How we assimilate and integrate change into our lives will determine the impact of new media and new technologies in the arts and humanities.

Lawrence's historical overview suggests that there are many kinds of technologies available, and most will remain available. One of the myths is that there is going to be a winner which will become the best new technology. It probably won't work that way. So long as we are working in a free market system, manufacturers will be inventing new products daily and enticing us to buy those new products. The new technologies will continue to vie with each other for market shares. How do we accept that notion in our lives and what impact will it have on the arts and the humanities?

The ubiquitous element in all of these new technologies is the computer. It consolidates the way we have previously thought about separate pursuits, such as audio and music production and video and film production, under the conceptual umbrella of computer technology. The computer gives us the ability to record, store and manipulate an ever-larger volume of information, and that information can be audio information, images, words and data. We are currently moving very quickly from what is referred to as an analog technology into a digital technology.

As Lawrence has indicated, a lot of what is happening in that transition is a kind of reinvention of the wheel. Film technology, which has been around for decades, is in fact still better in terms of quality and the representation of reality than

the best new technologies we have available, like high definition television. High definition television as it now exists is fast becoming equal to film, but we must remember that equal to film is not by definition better; rather it is different from film.

Let me break these technologies into various categories. There is audio; video; what I would call audio, video, data; and computer graphics. I will briefly discuss each of those.

In audio recording we now have technologies in the digital domain, and you may have heard of those. Compact discs represent one of the new technologies as does DAT, Digital Audio Tape. These are perfect examples of competing technologies that are both capable of the same kinds of results. It would probably be impossible to guess which one will be around in the next three to five years. Both of these technologies have enhanced audio to a degree never before realized, especially in distinction from video technologies. The revolutions in computer audio and digital audio have in fact created a level of quality far in excess of anything that has existed before.

There are really two areas of video that we can discuss briefly: the consumer area and the professional area. One of the interesting developments in video technology is that the difference in quality between the consumer products and the professional products is growing smaller each day. The quality that can be achieved from relatively inexpensive consumer hardware is not that far from the quality that would have taken many more thousands of dollars to produce as short a time as five years ago.

And now for the confusion. In the consumer area, there are currently VHS, BETA, VHSC, Super VHS, Super BETA, ED BETA and 8 millimeter, and some I probably have forgotten. This is merely an indication that there are many manufacturers competing to sell many products from a variety of technologies. Which of these will remain around and for how long is difficult to say, except that when you see "super" attached to something, you can usually expect that the non-super version will be out of the marketplace before long.

In the professional area of video, there is three-quarter inch video, Super VHS video, one-inch video, BETA Cam and M II. These are all the older analog versions of recording technologies. We now have D-1, the euphemism for digital component which I won't try to explain, and D-2, which is the digital composite. So there are a couple of new technologies in video in the professional digital domain, and a number of existing recording technologies in the analog domain.

My guess is that both analog and digital will be working side-by-side in the mega media industry for some years to

come, before things probably move entirely toward digital. The reason for that is quite simple. There is a very large and expensive installed base of hardware that will not be quickly disposed of until it is amortized properly.

What I am now calling audio, video and data includes technologies such as CD ROM, CDI, and CDV. Let me give you just a quick definition of these. CD ROM means Compact Disk Read Only Memory. That means that when you put a compact disk in a player, an enormous amount of data can be retrieved from the disk, but you cannot write onto or change the information that is on this disk. Right now it exists as an archival process disk, but it can store enormous amounts of information, equivalent to many books, on one small five-and-a-quarter-inch disk. It will soon be on three-and-a-half-inch disk.

CDI is Compact Disk Interactive, which we will demonstrate for you at the break. This new area essentially speaks to the comments Lawrence made on involving an audience more fully in an experience. In point of fact, the users of CD interactive technology can determine the way that they relate to that product and to the technology.

CDV is CD Video. Unlike analog tape and digital tape, which are both magnetic tape-based products, CDV is an optical disk-based product that can be used to record video information and audio information, as well as data and/or words, all on the same optical disk. It is currently being developed.

In computer graphics, there are systems too varied even to list, but it is probably the most fascinating of the areas. Computer graphics, in configurations from Cray super computers to personal computers like the McIntosh II, can be used to manipulate images in ways heretofore not even dreamed of.

That is an overview of where we are at this moment. In terms of improvements and developments in the near future, I can say that most of the new products will definitely be digital, as opposed to analog. The reason for that, I think, is that digital technologies will offer greater manipulative abilities than analog technologies. This means simply that we can do more with them in any of the areas we are discussing—in audio, in video, in data communications, et cetera.

In addition, the resolution, i.e., the quality of these existing technologies, will be enhanced still further within the next few years. Just as audio quality is better than it has ever been, video quality will approach and probably surpass film within a period of maybe five years. Certainly it will be used in conjunction with film.

The ubiquitousness of the computer and its digital technology, as it is used in conjunction with audio and video and computer graphics, will make many more things connective than has been the case before. What we have euphemistically called multi-media will change into a kind of mega media, in which the connectivity of the computer will allow projects to join various source materials from diverse points in time and space and assemble them in individual projects.

Further, I think the good news is that the user relationships to these technologies (the buzz word is "user interface") will become simpler rather than more difficult. It already is becoming simpler. That seems to be the desire of the manufacturers for the obvious reason, that they can sell more of these products.

One of the areas that needs to be enhanced is storage capacity. That problem area in technology is now being addressed, but how quickly it will be solved is anybody's guess. Let me give you a simple example. The memory necessary to record sounds of the sort that we are recording here today is at least an order of magnitude less than that which is required to record video information. So storage capacities have not yet caught up with some of the other technological advances that are taking place.

Now, what degree of aesthetic quality will be available with the new technology? I can only respond that with any new tools come new aesthetics. I can point to the past and suggest that, like the development of perspective in painting during the early Renaissance, new tools develop in their audiences new aesthetics based on the use of those tools. The introduction of new cadmium colors at the time of the Impressionists also changed the aesthetics in addition to the stylistic changes that were taking place. We are in the early stages of new media tools such as the computer, so it is very difficult to predict in what ways the aesthetics will change except to say for certain that they will.

Is high quality video equipment available to cultural organizations and at what expense? I think the answer to the first question is yes, based on two things. First, what is now considered consumer equipment can produce very high quality results when properly utilized. In addition, the research and development costs of many of these technologies have already been amortized by manufacturers, and as a result prices of many new products, even the most expensive ones, are tumbling and will continue to do so. New technologies are in fact more accessible to cultural organizations than they have ever been in the past.

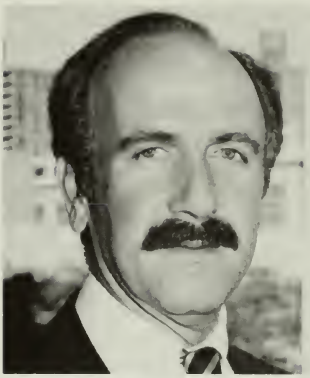
The problem of educating the public in the use of new media is probably one of the most difficult problems that we all face. I can only say that new paradigms and new ways of thinking and creating will be required. Just as we now think of the human brain as the computer paradigm, we will have to develop new ways to think about how to assimilate new technologies.

There is also a time compression element at work. The changes taking place are happening at an accelerated speed compared to the past. We need to find mechanisms to sort out from this endless flow of new products and technologies the ones we wish to use. I would suggest setting up a mechanism so that artists can be involved, perhaps with the development of new technologies and certainly with the initial applications of the products of those technologies. I think then, and only then, will the most innovative uses of these new technologies be quickly created.

We also have to have some mechanism for our own education to be continually enhanced. I believe that so much confusion abounds now about new technologies because there is no place to go to learn what is happening, to look at new products, to see how they work, and to be told something about them. I would suggest something on the order of state-of-the-art centers, sponsored by a consortium of manufacturers in conjunction with educational facilities, which would be operations and showcasing based rather than research and development based. They would essentially be places where you could see these technologies working in an integrated environment. Perhaps, too, short-term educational updates on technological developments might be made available.

Finally, what technology do we need to develop? Here I can make only generalizations. I think all of us might agree that we are looking for a technology that would become ubiquitous like books, telephone, radio and television. In order for that to happen in what we are calling mega media technologies, several things have to occur.

First we have to work to make user interfaces that are as easy for people as possible. They should be completely transparent in the same way that we no longer think very hard about dialing telephone numbers, especially when telephones can remember our most frequently dialed numbers. Portability is also important. When we can make these products truly portable, the more ubiquitous they will become and the more useful they will be in all of the areas we are discussing. Connectivity, linking one product with another, is an area in which a great deal of work is currently being done. The work must continue in order to make a truly ubiquitous new media



JOHN GOBERMAN is Director of Media Development of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York and Executive Producer of "Live from Lincoln Center." He developed technology for the live telecast of performing arts without disruptive technical equipment and originated the world's largest stereo simulcast network. Mr. Goberman has produced more than 74 telecasts on PBS, which have received two Peabody Awards and six Emmy Awards; he has received more than 20 Emmy Award nominations. He has served as Executive Producer/Consultant for the National Video Corporation, The Entertainment Channel, and KCET in Los Angeles.

technology. Finally, interactivity is critical. I think it is the most important area because it will allow each of us to be artists, if you will, in relationship to the technology.

Thank you very much.

MR. LESSER: Bruce, thank you. May I suggest to both the invited participants and to the members of the President's Committee, since we are moving along from one panelist to the next, that you make notes on what you want to ask about or comment on during the open discussion at the end of the presentations.

We have heard an overview of the past and present issues in the new media and the arts from Lawrence. From Bruce we have had a review of the existing and varied technologies and a look at their somewhat fragmented, maybe even anarchic growth. We will now move on to another related topic, the production issues. John Goberman will discuss them. He is Director of Media Development of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York and Executive Producer of "Live from Lincoln Center."

Production

MR. GOBERMAN: It is a tricky business to discuss production in terms of the new media. It is not terribly useful to explore what new technology means for production,

because it doesn't make much difference. High definition television may be here in the near future, but it doesn't really matter whether you produce something on high definition television or film.

What does make a difference is the market and how that program is going to reach it. I thought it might be interesting to discuss the difference between two of the projects that I have been involved in. One of them of course is "Live from Lincoln Center," which is a broadcast product. The other is a series of tapes that we have been doing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is not a broadcast product. Because "Live from Lincoln Center" is a broadcast product, it has an ancillary use for home video as well as an educational use, a library use and a research use.

The tapes we have been producing at the Metropolitan Museum are very specifically designed for home video use. If you enjoy an exhibit and you want to take it home with you, you can buy either a catalog or this home video version. It is not, however, a product useful for broadcast, and I can't imagine it has much research use since you can go to the museum and see the thing itself.

It may be useful to discuss the rationale for "Live from Lincoln Center," which has been on the air for about twelve years. It is important to note that it was constructed primarily for Lincoln Center and in a sense, has a very narrow, parochial point of view. Lincoln Center, aside from buildings and garages, is a consistent series of high quality performances. It has ten resident companies and it has the major stars of the performing arts world.

It has always seemed to me that one of the limitations of television is that it is not a presentation mechanism. It is a transmission mechanism. Broadcast television is a way of getting a picture from here to there, but it is nothing more than that. The television screen doesn't have a punch that can knock you out the way a movie screen can.

When an opera is being performed, there is a backstage chorus. The chorus can't see the conductor so we put a little black and white camera on the conductor. The chorus sees the conductor conducting on a television set backstage and off they go. As a matter of fact they do "go off" because they can't follow the television screen; television cannot convey the force of a conductor. There has to be a real person standing next to that television screen to watch the conductor, imitate what he is doing and get the chorus to do it.

The opera experience is being in the same room with somebody who is singing. With film or tape you don't have someone singing, you have the picture of someone singing

and it is not the same thing. So it has never seemed to me that you truly recreate the opera or ballet experience on a television screen.

What we learned in setting up "Live from Lincoln Center" was to treat it not as an opera or a ballet or symphony concert, but rather as an event. We understood that this would be "event television." We have produced a number of them and have had some "turkeys," but there have been some real events. The reason we do it live is really the magic of television. Television can take you there. It is happening now. Pavarotti may not hit that high C. Or the dancer may fall on his face. It is part of the mechanism of Lincoln Center. It is a performance that can happen only on live broadcast television.

So we began to produce these events and they seemed to do quite well on public television. Now the issue of home video has arisen. We have a great range of performances—Baryshnikov and Markarova in "Giselle" and Danny Kaye conducting the New York Philharmonic. Why are we not in the home video business? Well, as of today or tomorrow we will be, because we are about to sign an agreement with a home video distribution company. It took a year to negotiate these agreements for 10 broadcasts for two reasons.

One reason is that the home video market on which we depend—we are a nonprofit institution and I would say that here we are operating as an "unprofit"—does not exist in an important way for performing arts institutions. We once thought it did. There was an anticipation that everybody was going to have a library of home video products. But the performing arts are sort of a mile wide and an inch deep as far as the public is concerned. There are five operas that anybody cares about. There are perhaps five performers and five ballets. After that, the audience drops off about 75 percent. Whether some people expected to have eight different *La Bohemes* on their shelves is rather an open question, I think.

At any rate, a few years ago there was a great interest in home video and then it declined. However, by combining the home video advances and the advances for foreign television, we were able to aggregate enough money to pay the performers and unions who were not making extraordinary demands. The problem is not that some performer was out to make a fortune on this project. In fact, there were approximately 300 agreements that had to be made to produce this 10-show series and not one person said no. We set up a formula which I thought was extremely clever, and we never changed it. Everybody from Pavarotti to Isaac Stern to Leontyne Price said yes.

I think there were probably several reasons. One is that at that level everybody is a kind of colleague. No one wanted to be the one person to say no. The second reason is that there is a kind of golden glow that has been cast over past performances. There are older performances that everybody thinks are absolutely wonderful but not one person asked to see his own performance.

As of today, Lincoln Center is in the home video business, if there is a business. But I want to make the point that it is really a product created for broadcast. I think the problem in terms of the new media is not so much a question of production as it is a question of over-production. You can spend too much money doing these programs. Not one more person is going to watch if you spend another $10,000. It is just not going to matter.

With the other project that we started at the Metropolitan Museum the issue was to find a way of creating a home video product for people who come to an exhibition. The problem was to find a way of producing the video so that it didn't cost too much money. It was also important that it didn't say too much. Some things are a lot better as a book than they are as a television program or a video cassette. We are obviously not going to want a scholarly dissertation on a painting that would last for ten minutes. I don't think you could watch it. At the same time it should not be so hyped that it turns your stomach. We needed to strike a balance.

We came up with the approach of using videotape, not film, in an exhibition gallery. We made a videotape on "Treasures of the Holy Land," for instance, and figured out how much time we could spend; and we used Philippe de Montebello, who is one of the most photogenic and professional people in front of a camera.

The videos are actually quite nice. They are not a research product, because obviously you would go to a library for that. They are not a broadcast product, because it is limited to a gallery. It is a very small idea, but it is a way that you can take home a souvenir of the exhibition. Because this new technology of distribution exists—video cassettes—a new approach to production has happened. Some people like it; some people don't. I think it is an appropriate approach.

At Lincoln Center we also do performances of the New York Philharmonic or the American Ballet Theater which cost between $200,000 and $600,000 for a PBS broadcast. However, the same approach can be used on a local and regional basis for orchestras or ballet companies at a lower cost. The question is, are they aiming for a national broadcast on this basis? Is it worth spending the money, which would not be on a

straight line percentage basis, to do a broadcast for a local or regional performing arts company? I think there is no question it would be, if only for the identity of that organization. The cost might be only $50,000 instead of $200,000.

Then there is the question of what educational value any of this has. On a broadcast basis, it is a kind of drop-in value. People turn it on, but the thing about broadcast television is of course, you can turn it off. That is what happens most of the time. But the enthusiasm of the people who do watch is amazing. We get letters saying, "I am snowbound in my cabin in Minnesota because I have broken my leg. I am lying in bed and I just saw Pavarotti singing 'Nessun Dorma.' It is the best thing that ever happened." We get a number of letters like that.

What children watch it? I don't really know. I have seen children watching these performances and it is surprising how long they watch. In discussing education, perhaps the most valuable thing you can do is to put 30 kids in a room and put something on the screen they can watch. That is what the home video component of "Live from Lincoln Center" is. We haven't studied this issue, but the fact that performances are available and provide access to the arts is probably a good thing. However, there are no hard numbers to substantiate this.

There is no question as to the research value. We produced "Cunning Little Vixen" designed by Maurice Sendak. Fifty years from now somebody is going to want to take this out of the library to see what Maurice Sendak did with "Cunning Little Vixen." I can tell you nobody watched it. It got the biggest press but the smallest audience and, probably in the long run, will have a great deal of value. We did it knowing this, but it is really too bad it got the lowest rating we have ever had.

Measuring the production appropriate to the distribution mechanism is very difficult. One thing you have to live with in broadcast is what Sol Hurok said: if nobody wants to watch your program, there is no way you can stop them.

MR. LESSER: John, thanks very much. John has given us a couple of case studies to think about, Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan. We will proceed to the next panel presentation on distribution issues. Distribution has been mentioned in a number of contexts, and Milos Stehlik will tell us more about that topic.

MILOS STEHLIK is Co-founder and Co-director of Facets Multimedia, Inc., a library of over 7,000 foreign, independent American, classic, documentary and fine arts films on home video. He is co-author of *The Human Rights Film Guide* and commentator on film for WBEZ-FM, National Public Radio. He has served on the juries of numerous film festivals, and has curated several major film series and exhibitions. Mr. Stehlik is a founding member of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Area Film and Video Network, a Board member of the Chicago Latino Cinema, and an Advisory Board member of the American Film Institute's American Video Conference.

Distribution

MR. STEHLIK: Good morning. I feel that we are all being rather cynical because we are discussing the whole issue of video as if it has lived with us for a century. It is very new. It has been around for only ten years. The change this technology made was that for the first time you could take a moving image, put it into a box and have somebody take it home. This is an essential conceptual change for consumers.

The home video industry, from its very modest, wildfire beginnings, grew very rapidly. In fact, it already has a legend. There is a story that the whole idea of video rental started in Los Angeles when the owner of a record store company bought a tape, put a classified ad in *the Los Angeles Times,* was deluged with phone calls, and a month later opened the first video rental store. From that tall tale the home video business, some 10 to 12 years later, has become a $3.5 billion industry. For the first time last year its revenues exceeded the amount of money that the film studios derive from all film exhibition in the United States.

Most of that revenue is fueled by 26,000 video stores, most of which rent tapes and about one-fifth of which go out of business and are immediately replaced every year. Last year Americans rented 1.5 billion tapes. The VCR penetration—the percentage of homes which now have a video cassette

recorder—is close to 55 percent nationwide. In major metropolitan areas like New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, it ranges between 61 and 62 percent.

It is interesting to ponder what made consumer acceptance of this moving image in a box possible. There are certainly many sociological and probably political causes. One indication was the recent Harris study showing that the amount of leisure time Americans now enjoy—and I know this has been a subject of controversy—has declined by about 10 hours per week, which is a significant amount. This situation has even led to the term "couch potato," someone who sits at home and watches the tube.

The promise held out by the new home video technology was hailed at the time as a very significant advance, comparable to the invention of movable type. In this idealized new world, the consumer would be offered a multiplicity of choices. He could visit his local video store in Missoula, Montana, and take out a documentary on the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* as well as *Rocky III*. A student in Minneapolis could now study the work of Ingmar Bergman because of home video technology. It was believed that home video would become the dominant means of disseminating information and culture, that it would be the new democratic consumer technology. All of this has in some way happened but not exactly according to plan, because we still have the problem of how to connect the availability of our arts programming with a mechanism for getting it out to the marketplace. This idealism about home video really has a sense of *deja vu.* In the 1950s, people said that commercial television would make all things possible for the arts. The same comments were made about cable television in the 1970s.

Today the home video distribution business is dominated by a few major companies—Paramount, MCA, RCA, Warner, MGM—with thousands of other tiny home video manufacturers, some of whom are connected to a major studio. There is a very direct link between theatrical release, television play, home video, laser disk, and foreign sales, which are all part of the same package.

The foundation of home video, the product, is still the feature length commercial film. At the very beginning, when home video was introduced, the major companies like Paramount, RCA and MCA didn't know any more about marketing feature length films on home video than we know about marketing the arts on home video. This is why I feel that we are too cynical if we dismiss this new technology in terms of the arts.

Major companies used the only distribution structure available, the record business. Most of them had some connection to the music industry; in fact, the home video business in the beginning was populated by people from the record business. The distribution structure was the result of an "old boy's network" of a few large wholesalers who moved home video into the marketplace: Metro, Baker and Taylor, Ingram, ZBS, and Commtron, the largest one.

At the beginning of home video, there was also a tremendous thirst for product. Manufacturers bought anything and everything, believing blindly that if it was in a box and it was available, it would eventually make money. However, since they did not have a long range strategy, this didn't necessarily work. The positive effect of this buying spree was that a lot of interesting films made it to home video which otherwise would never have been bought had the video manufacturers known what they were doing in their own marketplace.

More recently the result has been a tremendous glut of product, a tightening on the number of home video releases, and certainly a shift toward a star-driven, mega-hit-driven mentality in the home video business. This is similar to what has happened to feature movies in theaters.

The first break with this feature-driven mentality was started by Stuart Karl, who founded the Karl-Lorimar Home Video Company and released the "Jane Fonda Workout" tape. The "Jane Fonda Workout" tape has sold 800,000 copies. More important, it established the field within the home video business called specialty video into which the arts—for better or for worse—would fall. In addition, it was the first tape that departed from the rental purposes for which videos were made. Consumers could now buy a tape instead of just renting it.

Today there is still encouragement in this field of specialty video. The Video Software Dealers Association predicts a flattening of home video software sales, but specialty video sales, which are only six percent of this market, are predicted to grow. Specialty videos, however, include all the exercise, home cooking, golfing, fishing, hunting and basket weaving instructional tapes as well as masterpieces from the Met. Nevertheless, in this field of specialty video, we can find Philip Glass co-existing with Bruce Springsteen.

The issue of distribution for the arts on home video is no different than it is for the arts in any sphere. The essential problem is how to disseminate a specialty product in a mass culture. The question is: how do you position an experimental video artist like Bill Viola in a marketplace that is about to spend $12 million to market and sell Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* on home video?

How do you bypass, or how do you use this old boy's network of video distributors, all of whom operate on tiny margins and have no interest in the arts? They know very well how to sell *Baby Boom* and *The Terminator,* but they don't know who Laurence Olivier is or, God forbid, Lucia de Lammermoor. These are people who stock in their warehouses 36,000 copies of *Crocodile Dundee* and not one copy of Preston Sturges' wonderful comedy *Miracle on Morgan's Creek.*

The main consumer of video has been the rental store, the mom-and-pop idea of the 1980s. Many people went into this business with no experience in film or the arts. How do you educate them to carry the arts on home video? This is the tremendous challenge that I think we face today.

There are some breakthroughs in this whole sphere. Certain means of alternative distribution are beginning to happen. I would like to tell you briefly my personal example. For 13 years I worked as a film exhibitor in a non-profit organization in Chicago called Facets, which works in art, theater and children's films. Three years ago, with the encouragement of Roger Ebert, one half of the dynamic film critic duo, we began renting a collection of 140 tapes in a theater lobby at a cost of $8,000.

Today the Facets' video collection has 7,000 tapes, which are hand-picked in the categories of art films, foreign films, independent American films, documentaries, fine arts films and experimental films. We provide 66,000 rentals annually in person or through the mail. If you live in New York or in Missoula, Montana, you can rent Ingmar Bergman or Bill Viola by mail. In 1988, we will sell to consumers somewhere around 80,000 home video cassettes.

Our whole philosophy is based on several consumer psychology principles. First of all, people will eventually get tired of seeing the same old hits now available in the video rental store. There is a universe of individuals nationwide starving for access to the arts. It is amazing how many people with cultural interests end up in odd places around this country.

Finally, a process of education in media and in the arts is possible if there is a long-term strategy. The question is accessibility. If the medium becomes as accessible as a book, eventually there is the possibility for change. The question is how to find and reach this universe of consumers who are interested in the arts on a national basis.

Here are several principles from my personal experience. First of all, make the product as accessible as possible. We rent tapes as well as sell them, so that if people see a tape, they may want to own it. Our initial research showed that the

best sales for an institutional video was somewhere around 100 copies. Under the worst circumstances, the home video goal is 1,000 copies. According to the 1986 survey of the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers, 20 non-profit media arts organizations in this country distributed approximately 4,600 films and 1,200 tapes and sold 359 films and 430 video tapes. This year Facets will sell 80,000 tapes directly to the consumer.

The question is, can we alter the distribution structure using the existing network of video rental stores? Can we encourage them to carry art films, documentaries and experimental films—not with the goal of making everyone a film scholar—but to teach the retailer that he has to differentiate himself from the competition and tap into existing specialized markets of art collectors, film collectors, foreign language teachers and other special interests? Can we utilize the growing presence of the public library and the university library in the marketplace? The library has to buy more than mass market paperbacks and therefore is obliged to buy more than the mass market video releases. There are positive steps in this direction from the American Library Association, which has undertaken several initiatives in this area.

There is pressure from the bottom up, directly from the consumer. Once consumers know that other types of video are available, they become in effect the best sales agents. They urge local librarians to stock independent American or fine arts videos. They become the dominant force in moving this whole structure forward.

Finally, there is a question of the reaction in the arts community for whom home video can act, more or less, as an educational or promotional tool. The verdict there is divided. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has been active in producing tapes for the home video market, and there are significant regional samples, like the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Others are very slow; the Museum of Modern Art has done nothing in the field of home video. Other museums, for example the Detroit Institute of the Arts or the Houston Museum, have produced tapes which go undistributed.

A question of aesthetics also enters into this and becomes a part of the issues we have to consider. Many of the programs produced about the arts are very bland because the film or video makers often come from the field of industrial film. What video offers is an opportunity for a natural marriage between video artist and the new media, for developing a new aesthetic to present performance art or theater in the field of home video.

A final factor has been the rapid disappearance of our film and video heritage. Certainly the National Endowment for the Arts has made significant efforts to support preservation, but there remains a question of access to the preserved work. In many cases, access becomes literacy. The home video has become the last resource for preserving and seeing many films, for example the whole heritage of French films of the 1930s.

In the last year, Facets has been involved in a large-scale project to preserve and disseminate widely on home video the key work of U.S. independent film makers, with generous assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts. This project is geared toward taking the important legacy of such film makers as James Broughton, Shirley Clark, Woody Vasulka, and Louis Hock into the home video marketplace and giving them a presence.

The other challenge for home video is to expand perceptions to allow for the creation and dissemination of new art forms which become significant in the total growth of the arts. In some ways, Americans are behind in the consumer market. For example, in the Eastern European block countries, home video very quickly has become the underground means of disseminating political, social and cultural information. There home video is the new tool for keeping many countries culturally free.

We are currently working with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to release in the U.S. a series of five tapes by the eminent writers, Marquerite Duras and Alain Robbe-Grillet, who also happen to be filmmakers. Each tape will be issued with a book on their film work.

I brought an example of what it is possible to create in terms of home video. It is a project funded by a partnership between Sweden and France, which commissioned a number of artists in various media to travel by ship to the Arctic. The result is a published book with photographs, an original photographic print and a video tape, all of which you can take home. There is also a symphony issued on CD, radio reportage on cassette, and a series of three films which were shot in 35 millimeter and released theatrically by Jean Rouch, Tihe Tonroth and Raul Ruiz. This project creatively combines various arts and uses video in a very interactive way. Thank you.

MR. LESSER: Milos, thanks a lot. Milos is a co-founder and co-director of a group that he mentioned in his remarks, Facets Multimedia Incorporated, a library of over 7,000 foreign, independent, American classic, documentary and fine arts films on home video.

[Demonstrations of interactive ACTV by Diana Gagnon and of CPI by Ron Rich followed.]

CHLOE AARON is Director of Cultural Programming for KQED, San Francisco's public television station. She provided leadership for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Library Video Classics Project. She initiated significant programming for public broadcasting both as president of a consulting firm in New York and as Director of the Film, Television and Radio Program at the National Endowment for the Arts. Mrs. Aaron is a member of the Trustee Committee on Film of the Museum of Modern Art and the boards of the Center for Visual History, the Nancy Hanks Center and the American Jazz Orchestra.

MR. LESSER: Thank you. Chloe Aaron is going to talk about Opportunities for the Cultural Community. Chloe serves as Director of Cultural Programs for KQED, San Francisco's public television station. She has provided materials describing the MacArthur Foundation Library Video Classic's Project. Chloe.

Opportunities for the Cultural Community

MS. AARON: Thank you, Jerry. I am delighted to be here to tell you about The MacArthur Foundation Video Classics Project. We have had a wonderful overview on video this morning, right up to this fascinating technology display. My concentration has been in a very simple form which may be out of date soon—the VHS cassette. I want to talk first about the availability of the arts and humanities through video technology, in this case the cassette, and then move on to collaborative funding opportunities. The best way to do that is to simply tell you how our project came about.

First of all, it is appropriate that we are here in the Museum of Modern Art, because it leads to a general metaphor that explains why we are so concerned about the video classics. Try to imagine the museum acquiring paintings, being allowed to exhibit them for only three years, and then having to lock them up. This is what I faced in early 1986 when I began to

look at virtually all of the PBS heritage of outstanding programs. There are many more than the 20 displayed on my poster. In early 1986 the broadcast rights had expired for most of those programs, which were only available for three years of broadcast. For the most part, there was no hope that any of them would be available on home video.

Subsequently, two of them have been cleared for home video: "Jewel in the Crown" and the "Vietnam" series. I want to point out that they are very expensive. Imagine that the only books available to children or to adults who were continuing their education were $29.95 and up. That is prohibitive for a lot of people and it doesn't allow people to pursue a continuing education in the disciplines represented on educational PBS series.

I would also like to make a broader point. We have often been asked if, in promoting these videos, we are in effect undermining people who read. It is quite the contrary. When I was head of programming at PBS for the last half of the 1970s, we found, without exception, that when a series was on television—whether it was David Attenborough's "Life on Earth" or Jacob Bronowski's "Ascent of Man"—the book sales soared. I have learned since, in talking to publishers, that a tie-in with a PBS series of three or more episodes will mean ten times the book sales. "I, Claudius," for example, stimulates reading in Roman history and the figures are there to prove it. We are not undermining reading since these series promote book sales and library lending.

Back to how this project came into being. In 1986 I was approached by the President of the Revson Foundation, Eli Evans, who asked a simple question: "Is it time for a Carnegie Commission III on public broadcasting?" With no thought to diplomacy, I quickly said, "No, it is absurd. We have had enough studies." I felt strongly about this because there had already been two studies. Most of the recommendations in Carnegie I and Carnegie II were gathering dust on a shelf. I winced at the idea that any foundation might spend more money on studies that nobody would pay any attention to.

I was challenged by Eli to come up with an appropriate idea for the 20th anniversary of public broadcasting in 1987. After my years at PBS, I felt it would be a scandalous waste if public broadcasting programs were no longer available to the American public. The cost of the twenty series in our project is over $100 million, and three or four brief broadcasts are hardly a good use of resources.

I tried to come up with a plan to make these kinds of programs available to the American public. I quickly discovered that the home video rights had not been cleared for most of

them. Some of these programs, like "Ascent of Man," went back to 1970. No one was talking about VCRs then, so no one thought about negotiating for cassette rights. It turned out that the only rights that had been cleared, and in many cases were still valid, were for libraries and schools. I ruled out schools because the access is limited; the advantages of public libraries seemed clear.

The only problem with the public library rights was that the distributors were selling these programs for an average of $300 an hour. I did an anecdotal research project, calling various libraries to ask them if they had the programs, and for the most part they said, "No, we can't afford them. But," they said, "we are distributing feature films." In the month that I was calling *Terms of Endearment* was the big hit.

Clearly, we had a problem. The libraries were buying feature films for between 25 and 35 dollars an hour, but they couldn't afford Bill Moyer's "Walk through the 20th Century" or the Shakespeare plays. But they said they would like them and would buy them if they were affordable.

Why these programs were so expensive relates to a point that Milos made. For the most part, distributors gained their experience in earlier decades by distributing 16 millimeter films, which were expensive. Libraries would save money to buy one or two, and spend several hundred dollars for them. The distributors assumed that public broadcasting programs would also interest a small, limited market. The prices therefore were not adjusted lower, and the result was indeed a small market.

In order to make these programs available, I simply went to the distributors, starting with Time-Life, and said, "I assume you are not selling very many of these cassettes for $300 an hour." They agreed that was the case. I asked how much they could reduce the price if they had an order for 1,000. Time-Life exercised leadership and said that if I could place an order that size they would sell them for $30 an hour. Well, that was a major discount. It also gave me a lot of leverage with other distributors. They did scream and yell and say it was impossible at the beginning, that they would go out of business. However, when they did the figures, they found they could make a profit because of the volume.

We proceeded on that basis to talk to the Revson Foundation; because of limited resources, they in turn called the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The MacArthur Foundation was wonderful to deal with because it has a very small staff. The phone call I got was simply, "Would you come and talk to our board about this? It looks interesting." The Board was well briefed by William Kirby and asked good

questions. When I left, we had a commitment. This is very heady stuff for somebody who was at the National Endowment for the Arts for years and knows how slow the funding process can be. That is no criticism; I was on the other end of it, too.

The money that the MacArthur Foundation put up was not a subsidy to the distributor or to the producers. The MacArthur Foundation pays for my time and the marketing efforts which include the booklets, the poster, and a sort of boiler room sales force located in Chicago. After each mailing, they phone the libraries to determine their interest.

As of this week, we have topped 500 orders for the 207 cassettes in the 20 different series. The deadline is July 31, 1988, and we are hopeful that we will reach 1,000 orders. The price for 207 cassettes is $6,000; the retail price before we started this project would have been $60,000. Each library also receives at least 200 copies of the program guide as part of the promotion, with the idea that if libraries share them with their patrons when they take out one show, they might come back for another.

Some libraries, in spite of the lower price, find that it is hard for them to afford $6,000. News clippings from around the country show that some of them are holding bake sales, some of them are requesting funds from their state humanities council or local businesses and foundations.

The week that the marketing began, the Kinnelon (New Jersey) Library called us to say that a man in the community had read about the project in the *New York Times* and wanted to donate $6,000. We were so delighted that we ordered gift stickers from the same San Francisco designer who made the poster. That donor, although he hadn't asked for it, will have his name inside all 207 cassette boxes at the library.

We are hoping that other local foundations and patrons might feel that this is a very inexpensive way to do something good for their library and to get credit for it. It is interesting to me, as a new resident of San Francisco, to note that the poorest areas, south San Francisco for example, have all bought these programs. Marin County has yet to buy a single one.

It is available only to libraries because they were the only rights that existed for all twenty of these series at the time we started. Some of these series are available to schools, but not as part of this package. Two of them, "Jewel in the Crown" and "I, Claudius," have withheld the university library rights. We are hoping to change this, because we have had many calls from university libraries.

The opportunities for other funding seem to me to be very rich. I know that the President's Committee took leadership a few years ago with Exxon to place certain programs from the "Great Performances" series in libraries around the country. That was a terrific beginning. We have only five "Great Performances" available; I would like to see all of them in the libraries.

Lawrence earlier talked to you about "Voices and Visions." It seems to me that is a natural for the library, because you have not only the programs in "Voices and Visions," but also the books of poetry. Another obvious candidate for distribution to libraries would be the series, already broadcast in San Francisco, of Bill Moyer's interviews with Joseph Campbell. There was an article by John O'Connor yesterday in the *New York Times* which was a veiled criticism of one station manager in the PBS system. Last November the station manager had said that he was not looking forward to the Joseph Campbell series because his viewers never wrote to him and asked for interviews with Joseph Campbell. He predicted that the series would be a disaster.

In fact, "Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth" has already run in that city as well as San Francisco. I understand the ratings were terrific there and all over the country, and I can tell you the exact numbers in San Francisco. They doubled our normal audience share and were averaging a ten share last week when they were run Monday through Friday at ten o'clock. The station is receiving 100 calls a day asking for books. This is more phone calls than KQED TV has ever received on any series. The bookstores have been swamped and all Joseph Campbell books, not just the most recent one, have been bought out and are back ordered.

So I was thinking when John was talking about the Sendak piece, that even if he didn't get the ten share this time around, it could have a new life on a library shelf. There are many fans of Maurice Sendak who would take out the "Cunning Little Vixen" just because it was by Sendak.

This kind of project seems to be a very modest investment to consider. It not only preserves our past, but also disseminates it. For me, it has the feeling of unlocking manuscripts in a medieval monastery. And these programs don't have to take the place of new production because the cost is modest.

In the case of my project, the key was simply the marketing. But I would encourage anyone involved in the production of these cultural programs to be thinking at the very beginning about how to get it out to the libraries once the broadcast life is over. I hope this kind of effort will continue with

everything we think is worth sharing with the next generation.

MR. LESSER: Chloe, thanks very much. Let's begin our discussion with a comment from Lynne Cheney.

Discussion

MS. CHENEY: Many of the state humanities councils have resource centers with wonderful films that NEH has helped produce and that they have acquired at great expense. It is a source of frustration that they cannot be more widely distributed. Are they considered to be libraries? Could they benefit from your project? Is there a legal problem we need to look into?

MS. AARON: In terms of past programs, the easiest rights to define are for public libraries and schools. Beyond that, it has to be on a case by case basis.

MS. CHENEY: If "Voices and Visions" became part of this process, is there any benefit to the producer?

MR. PITKETHLY: "Voices and Visions" is now being distributed by the Annenberg/CPB project through Intellimation in Santa Barbara. This relates to the point of the importance of gearing your distribution to a broadcast. Never mind what kind of sales you can generate through a good sales pitch. The latest figures I saw showed that 600 sets of the program had already been distributed to libraries and schools, plus another 700 or 800 to individuals. At this point they are receiving orders at the rate of approximately 20 sets per week, simply from the broadcast publicity.

MR. McHENRY: I think we ought to recognize that one of the great patrons of television and the arts is our own Rawleigh Warner. I think his company, Mobil Corporation, was the first one to start the movement toward quality. Rawleigh, I am sure you have some comments.

I would also like to say that I found the panel presentations absolutely fascinating. You have added to my knowledge in many ways. I thought it was wonderful. John, can you superimpose subtitles on these opera tapes?

MR. GOBERMAN: We started in 1977 actually putting subtitles on live performances. We have the option of whether to have it on the broadcast tape or not. All video tapes in a foreign language would be subtitled. The "Cunning Little Vixen," an English opera, was subtitled because you couldn't understand what they were saying.

MR. LESSER: Mr. Warner, do you want to pick up on Mr. McHenry's kind comments?

MR. WARNER: Thank you, Mr. McHenry, but I think

there are others that have priority.

MR. LESSER: Thank you. Peter Dirr, you had a comment. Any others?

MR. DIRR: I want to pick up on the discussion of "Voices and Visions." I represent the Annenberg/CPB Project, which was set up in 1981 with a grant from Walter Annenberg to do two things. First, the project uses existing telecommunication and information technologies to make higher education opportunities available to people who couldn't take advantage of them through traditional means. Secondly, the project demonstrates how new technologies can be used to address the needs of higher education.

From the beginning, we have looked at both broadcast and nonbroadcast distribution for television-based, video-based and audio-based products. To say broadcast versus nonbroadcast is to oversimplify, because even within the broadcast realm, you have different strata of distribution. This has implications for the rights, for the scope of distribution, and for the exposure to the American public, even before you begin looking at the nonbroadcast requirements in the specialized marketplaces in which we function.

It is critical to us that the flexible availability of new resources be locked in at the time of production. We do that in our contract. As a rule, we clear all domestic rights at the time of production for nine or more years for all the courses that we have funded. For us life begins after broadcast. The broadcast is a means of exposing the product to a broad segment of the American public. We fund the development of the television components, print components, textbooks, study guides and often audio components. In order for these materials to become courses that are available for college credit, something has to happen after the broadcast.

At first we used a traditional approach to the nonbroadcast distribution of these products. We found them to be too expensive for schools and libraries and consequently suffered many of the problems that you have heard about today. In August 1987, we set up a new approach whereby all of our products, including "Voices and Visions," "The Brain," and "The Planet Earth," are available for $30 an hour maximum. There are even lower prices for some of them. The results have been astounding. As Lawrence said, we have sold about 600 sets of "Voices and Visions" since it premiered in January.

That is partly a result of the broadcast, but also of a tightly coordinated marketing campaign to colleges, universities, public libraries and individuals. We are finding that with the price of $30 an hour, we are now selling significant numbers to individuals who purchase them for home use. At this point

we have sold approximately 35,000 to 45,000 cassettes in the first year of operation. We are underwriting the marketing costs. The operation, including the marketing costs, will be self-supporting after two to two-and-a-half years.

MR. LESSER: Thanks, Peter. John, you had a question for the panelists.

MR. SCHOTT: I will make it brief. It will be a parting shot, and I will try to be aggressive. I believe that when you leave a meeting, you should think about what has been accomplished and where you are going. I hope as you leave here you will not think that you have closed off the debate about the mega media, but rather just opened it.

The reason you have just opened it is that we have left out a very important one-third of our discussion. In looking at the media, we have defined it as a medium of reproduction and distribution. But in the future we need to discuss what it is that we want to say in this new medium.

I think you will see, as we look back on this decade from the 21st century, that it will be the late 1980s and the early 1990s which historians record as the time when artists returned to television to create what we might call broadcast art. It is a mistake to propagate, as I think this discussion somewhat does in a rather quiet but insidious fashion, the notions that there is high culture and low culture; that the role of the arts is to present high culture in venues other than television; and that the role of television is to distribute these in a low cultural form.

This is not the case, and I think what we are going to see in the next decade is that television itself will be regarded as an art form. There is a recent poll from Lou Harris which suggests that there is a decline in public attendance at arts events and that, in the future, television is going to be a venue in which Americans encounter the arts. I would like to invite you to look to the future when new forms and new media will be invented, and see that the electronic arts are very much on the horizon for us. It is important not to let our discussion regard the new media simply as a medium of recording and distribution.

MR. LESSER: Thank you for adding that necessary dimension. I would like to come back to another dimension, which has been already noted. Milos and others have talked about the international aspect of these issues. We have somebody from the Rockefeller Foundation here, and they are embarking on an international distribution project which you will want to know about. Sorry to leave you so little time, Jan; please tell us a bit about your project.

MS. GROSSMAN: I want to take this opportunity to tell you about a new project at the Rockefeller Foundation which is closely related to today's discussion.

I am a consultant in the arts and humanities and I work in film and video. This project is very closely related to today's discussion. Alberta Arthurs, the director of arts and humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation, has recently initiated a feasibility study exploring the possible development of an international, not-for-profit video cassette distribution company for arts and educational programming. This project would identify film and video artists throughout the world and select works to be made available to branch libraries, universities, cultural institutions, media centers and possibly special retail outlets.

The material which would be the focus of the project would be work that is currently inaccessible to existing distribution services in VHS format. In the preliminary phase of the study we are looking at feature films, documentaries, video art, experimental films, performing and fine arts programs and animation and short works, with a particular emphasis on work from Latin America, Asia and Africa. Herman Kravitz, who is heading the study, is the founder and president of New World Records, a company which was started initially through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and focuses on recordings of American composers.

I think it may be useful to tell you briefly about the arts and humanities guidelines and the interests of the foundation which led to this feasibility study. The guidelines were revised in 1987 to strengthen the arts and humanities commitment to international and intercultural activity. The department is now supporting projects which promote understanding between cultures, internationally and within this country. The foundation also has a long-standing tradition of support for individual creative projects. This new project would certainly have as its focus the film and video artist.

In terms of performing and visual arts, the Foundation is now addressing the issue of intercultural and international activity by sharing new works with audiences. This can be done through touring and presentation projects. Today with the growth of video technology and access to video equipment, it is possible, through distribution, to bring important creative work from film and video to a wide audience. As this panel has so eloquently stated, this is a transitional period and it is time to think along these lines.

We are now in the initial phase. We are talking to artists, distribution companies, representatives of the film and video community, libraries, and universities. We are talking to them

individually as well as bringing together small groups of advisors to help us identify the kind of work that a new service could make available and to determine how such a project could best meet the needs of audiences and creators.

MR. LESSER: Thank you very much. Caroline.

MS. AHMANSON: I think the one thing we have to work on is the marketing that Chloe was talking about. These types of programs should be recycled, and not only to libraries, because the cost of the initial production is so great. Television stations, even public broadcasting stations, keep looking for new material. Recycling has been sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities with private matching funds. "The Adams Chronicles" started the idea of showing a video television series in libraries, and it encouraged research on American history by young people and older people alike.

I don't think there is any question that we should be recycling all these programs. In an example from the private sector, the Disney Company recycles all of their classics every seven years as well as their summer shows, which are their big hits. There is no reason why our great arts and humanities programs should not be recycled, too.

They should be distributed for broadcast also because the prices of live performances are causing people to stay home. When you have to pay $6 or $7 per ticket, families often can't afford to go to the movies. A ticket to a live performance for $35 is an even bigger cost. Video is one way in which a majority of people can become better educated in the arts and humanities.

There is no question that video is a new language. I have a nine year old granddaughter who has her own computer. When I go shopping with her to buy software, I am absolutely amazed. I expect her to buy games or colorization programs, but she doesn't. She buys educational programs. What these young people are doing is wonderful. We have to look through the eyes of the new generation and see that technology is the language and vocabulary of the future.

I would like to add a note on the importance of private support for efforts in the areas we are discussing today. Let's go back to what this committee has done from the private sector point of view. The Medici Awards by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce again next week will honor those companies and businesses who contribute the most to the arts.

The private sector has a significant role to play. The National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities serve as the catalysts for private sector contributions. This system of support needs to be maintained, and we also need to protect incentives for individual giving.

MR. CHAPIN: Some of us around this table have been involved in one form or another with public television or the video cassette market for many years. This is the first time I have ever heard a comprehensive report on this particular, vitally important segment of our lives. I would like to thank you for doing it in an effective and extremely interesting manner.

MR. HODSOLL: I was going to say the same thing, but I will just endorse what Schuyler has said. I also want to say that all funders, whether private institutions or government agencies, ought to pay more attention to the rights that are negotiated for productions today. In the past, as Chloe pointed out, nobody thought of home video or cable or other innovations. Agreements were put together with very restrictive rights, and you can't change those agreements now. You can only try to negotiate better arrangements today than in the past.

For the future, one thing that everybody in the funding business should keep in mind is the derivative rights that apply after the initial broadcast, and think about the educational objectives of these materials. Right now we have the most peculiar situation that I have ever encountered. We have material that would never reap a profit for anybody, even if there were no rights at all. And yet it is bound up in rights that are extremely restrictive, as in the union agreements of symphony orchestras. Everybody feels that there is a huge pot of gold out there but this material, which reflects our cultural heritage and contemporary expression, can't even reach the limited audiences that want it. We must think about rights and how they should be negotiated for future production.

MS. AARON: I would like to underscore what Frank said by giving one specific example. "Cosmos" is not on the video classics list because the music rights were not properly cleared; in order to include "Cosmos" we would have to replace all the music, which is prohibited.

MR. HEISKELL: Jerry, gentlemen, Chloe, we are very grateful to you. It has been a marvelous educational experience for all of us.

Participants in the Discussion

CAROLINE L. AHMANSON is former Chairman of the Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

SCHUYLER G. CHAPIN is the former Dean of the School of the Arts, Columbia University.

LYNNE V. CHENEY is Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

PETER DIRR is Deputy Director of the Annenberg/Corporation for Public Broadcasting Project.

JAN GROSSMAN is a consultant on the arts and the humanities for the Rockefeller Foundation.

ANDREW HEISKELL is Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and former Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Time Inc.

FRANK HODSOLL is Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

BARNABAS MC HENRY is Co-Vice Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

JOHN SCHOTT is Executive Producer of the PBS series, "Alive from Off Broadway."

RALEIGH WARNER, JR. is the former Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Mobil Corporation.

President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

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